MTS History

2000: Interim final rule for tribal child support programs published

2002-2005: Tribal Systems Workgroup studied feasibility of automating tribal child support programs, developed essential system requirements, and created the general system design

2004: Final rule for tribal child support programs published (45 CFR Part 309)

2006: Feasibility study, market study and cost-benefit analysis completed

2007: Concurrence of ACF Assistant Secretary to build MTS; software development begins

2009: Forest County Potawatomi Community selected to pilot test the MTS

2010: Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma joins pilot testing; tribal system regulations published (45 CFR Part 310)

2012: MTS Pilot ends

2013: MTS Launch planning begins

Inside this Issue

Welcome to our Newsletter

The Model Tribal System (MTS) is a child support system, designed using tribal requirements, specifically for the management of tribal child support programs. The project is being managed by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) through the Division of State and Tribal Systems (DSTS).

The Office of Child Support Enforcement welcomes you to the debut issue of the MTS Flash. This monthly newsletter is your one-stop-shop for the latest information on the MTS. We realize that throughout the coming months, as the MTS is officially implemented with additional tribes you will want to stay in-touch with the latest news and events.

In this month's issue we have some basic information for you on the Implementation Paths for MTS and the implications of those paths. This information was shared with tribes during a webinar on December 12, 2012, but we realize, you may not have had the opportunity to attend.

We also wanted to share with you some basic MTS definitions and other information about the system so that you can become more grounded in the history and functions of the system. Our future editions will provide updated information on the implementation, the progress of new MTS installations, and lessons learned from our work with you.

Latest News...

We would like to congratulate the Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma and Forest County Potawatomi Community on the successful operation of the MTS and the official end of the pilot period. As of February 1, 2013, the two tribes are running 434 cases on the system, have cut over 1,000 checks, and processed over $450,000 dollars. OCSE is very grateful for the time, energy and commitment of the tribes for their long-standing effort.

The MTS Logo Story

The four concentric circles, one in another, represent the MTS and its support of the tribal child support program. Together they show that all activities in it are separate, and yet connected. The four bold colors represent tribal culture and tradition, and the bright future of the tribal child support program. The logo expresses the foundation of the MTS; both a comprehensive operational system, and one that can alternatively be used on only a module-by-module basis. Secure and comprehensive, flexible and modern, the MTS supports the sovereignty and individuality of the tribal child support program.

Model Tribal System Readying for Launch

Today 59 tribes operate start-up or comprehensive child support programs—10 more than a year ago. These tribal programs are reaching custodial and noncustodial parents in their communities, helping them support their children financially and enrich their children's lives emotionally, in a culturally appropriate manner.

As partners in the national child support program, OCSE and tribal child support programs will cross a much-anticipated milestone early next year when OCSE launches the Model Tribal System (MTS). The MTS is an award-winning, state-of-the-art computer system designed to recognize the importance and benefits of integrating automation in the daily operations of comprehensive tribal child support programs. The MTS will serve as a key tool for programs to improve efficiency in case management and develop other areas of the program, offering tribal agencies and consortia direct access to similar technologies and automated systems that state child support agencies have had for years. The MTS uses open software to support organizations with up to 25 offices and 100 concurrent users, handling workloads of up to 25,000 cases.

By improving the level of automation in tribal child support programs, the MTS can increase program capacity to work more cases. The MTS will automate distribution, reporting, referrals—all aspects of casework. The MTS also will allow tribes to tailor their automated systems to their needs, for example, even something as simple as putting their logos on letters to custodial and noncustodial parents. And, the MTS will help will free up more time for workers to talk face-to-face with clients, an approach that characterizes tribal programs.

The launch will follow several years of tribal consultation, research, design and development in OCSE—using tribal requirements—as well as testing the system in two tribal child support programs: the Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma and Forest County Potawatomi Community. I appreciate the hard work, time, and resources provided by these two tribal programs to test the MTS. Other tribal programs, too, had a chance to explore and experiment with the MTS in a national "sandbox," an operational version of the system.

OCSE will make the MTS available to all interested tribes and continue to collaborate with tribes on the launch plans and technical assistance requests, respectful of tribal sovereignty and the beliefs and traditions of all people in Indian Country.

Earlier this month, I reached out to tribal leaders operating child support programs about MTS implementation issues such as timing, schedule, and funding resources. Based on the leaders' feedback, we will gauge interest in installing and using the MTS, and then customize the launch plan, considering our available resources. You can find information about funding for tribal automated systems and the Model Tribal System on the OCSE web page for Tribal Systems.

As this year ends and we welcome 2013, we will continue to work in partnership with tribes operating child support programs. We hope you will share ideas with us on improvements and opportunities you foresee in your agency as the MTS becomes available. I appreciate your comments on this blog.

Vicki Turetsky

MTS Implementation Paths

For those of you who are interested in using MTS, we have identified the following four possible paths from which tribes could choose:

OCSE-Supported: You may choose to use OCSE support with installation, testing, and configuration activities (similar to our work with the Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma and Forest County Potawatomi Community).

Independently Supported: You may choose to receive the MTS system and use your own internal or contract information technology (IT) resources to manage the installation, testing, and configuration activities.

Tribal Organization Supported: You may choose to join a tribal organization such as a MTS Consortium. We expect there will be several Tribal Organizations/Consortiums offering a range of services from training to comprehensive IT support.

Self-Implementing: You may choose to receive/install, test, and configure the MTS using internal or contract information technology resources and then alter it or expand it for your tribe's unique business processes.

Each option has many implications for your tribe. The chart below highlights a few of the major points that you will need to consider as you choose a path that fits your needs.

The first three options will allow you to continue to receive and accept system updates from OCSE as the MTS continues to grow. Throughout the lifespan of MTS we will be gathering feedback from these tribes to adjust the system, and to add functionality in order to keep pace with the growing needs of the tribal child support program. If you choose the Self-Implementing path, you will be able to make whatever changes you want, as you see fit, but it will limit the amount of support you receive from OCSE in the future (since your system may or may not resemble the original MTS).

Major Implications of the Implementation Paths				
	Who provides technical implementation support?	**Will tribes have input on changes to MTS?**	**Will tribes be able to obtain new releases?**	**Will tribes be able to obtain help desk support from OCSE?**
OCSE-Supported	OCSE (based on resources)	Yes	Yes	Yes (during installation, very limited thereafter)
Independently Supported	Tribal Resources (internal or contractual)	Yes	Yes	Very Limited (based on available resources)
Tribal Organization Supported	Tribal Organization/ Consortia Lead	Yes (through the Tribal Organization/Consortia Lead)	Yes (through the Tribal Organization/Consortia Lead)	No (support is provided by the Tribal Organization/Consortia Lead
Self-Implementing	Tribal Resources (internal or contractual)	No	Yes (but you will need to do extensive testing prior to using any new MTS releases)	No (some limited initial technical support is possible)

Recent Enhancements

In working with the pilot tribes (Forest County Potawatomi Community and the Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma), we have added the following enhancements. Many of these enhancements were outside of the original MTS requirements but were deemed important to assist you with the operation of your child support program.

The MTS now allows for:

- Alternative payment methods including direct, indirect, and in-kind payments
- Better TANF support through IV-A modificatioins
- Automated bank reconciliation
- Customizable beginning account balances
- External check printing and check configuration
- Manual adjustments and recoupments

MTS Definitions

Advance Planning Document: A document submitted by a tribe seeking funding to install the MTS, a state system, another tribal system, or to make improvements to their installed copy of the MTS, state or tribal system, as allowed by regulations at 45 CFR Part 310.

Configuration: The MTS has a configuration module that allows the selection of various options in how the system will perform and operate. Examples of configurable items include how the MTS will handle different types of data (automatically update or require the user to confirm they want the data updated), how it will print documents (locally or centrally), what interest rate it will charge on arrears debts, what graphics get displayed for use in document generation and other items needed to ensure the system works for each individual tribe according to their specific policies.

Development: Any defect fixes or design changes resulting in modification of the existing MTS software or database.

Installation: All activities needed to install computer hardware and software, clean-up and enter case data, and train IT and program staff to operate and use a Computerized Tribal IV-D System or Office Automation.

Maintenance: All routine activities needed to keep a system in good operation. These activities may include upgrading hardware and system software, creating new reports, making backup copies of the data and software, and other regular support activities.

Testing: The process of verifying that the MTS system is working to its full capacity and is correctly configured to the tribe's needs.

Letter to Tribal Leaders

On November 8, 2012 we sent a letter to tribal leaders to gather information on your tribe's individual plans for the Model Tribal System. Responses were requested by January 15, 2013. Tribes requested an extension; thus, responses were requested by January 31, 2013. The responses are currently being analyzed.

We will provide more information in upcoming months regarding the development of the customized implementation plan. If you have any questions, or your tribal leader did not receive a letter, please contact Sheila Drake, OCSE Senior Advisor, at Sheila.Drake@acf.hhs.gov.

For More Information

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www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/tribal-systems